

Joint Meeting of the County Council  
and Board of Commissioners

December 4, 2007 – 8:08 am

Meeting called to order by President Spaetti. Councilmen Spaetti, Bunner, Ebert, Winsett, Kroeger, Kress, Cochenour, and Council Attorney Wetherill were present. Also present were Commissioners Rininger, Logsdon, Gogel, and Board Attorney Lueken.

LTRSD

Spaetti stated that there was a discussion by several in attendance with the board regarding the LTRSD prior to calling the meeting to order. No decisions made at this informal discussion.

Old Jail and Spencer County Public Safety Building

Rininger stated that there are many issues regarding the old jail. He listed several examples, such as: The Way's request to use the building, the neighborhood's concern about The Way, the impact of The Way on the City of Rockport, the needs of the County Corrections Board, and the future need for a possible county annex.

Logsdon stated that the board needs to look at the future needs of the county. Logsdon explained that when the grant was applied for last year for the Spencer County Public Safety Building the county had little time to examine the best solution for the county. Now the deadline for re-applying is rapidly approaching, so this joint meeting was called to look at all of the options: should the extension office be moved to the Chrisney area, should EMS be moved to the Chrisney area, what offices are allowed to move and what should stay, could some of the offices that are currently renting office space be moved to county owned buildings, and will the Community Corrections Board need more space. Other questions are: should the county re-apply for the grant; if the grant is won, can the county afford to pay for its portion; if the old jail was turned over to the County Corrections Board, will that help; could the old jail be torn down and a new building be built.

Cochenour asked when the County Highway Garage loan will be paid-off. It will be paid off in January of 2010. Winsett stated that we need to see what can be afforded before any commitment is made. Logsdon stated that there are buildings in the county sitting empty. Ebert stated that he cannot see putting any money into the old jail. Bunner stated that the county needs to be fiscally responsible. It may be wiser to use current buildings such as the LEC building. Bunner further suggested that maybe the old jail be given to The Way and the county spend the money on remodeling the old Spunky's building. (The Spunky's building is located beside the Soil & Water building on SR 66)

Ron Conner, representing The Way, expressed appreciation for all that serve the public, and he has no intention of hurting anyone. Conner stated that all of the members of The Way work voluntarily and have nothing to gain financially. The location of the old jail works very well for the work of The Way. The Way has already helped several people. The men released from jail need someone there for them when they get out. Sam McNeely stated that he has been in jail ministry for 10 years and statistics support faith based programs such as The Way. Cindy Limp, of Rockport Printers, presented a list of 15 neighborhood people in Rockport who oppose The Way locating on Main Street, along with a list of the reasons why, including safety of the residents. Logsdon suggested that The Way, the Rockport Council, and the neighborhood people need to meet and talk though all of the concerns. Gogel agreed, stating that it would probably alleviate many of the fears. Logsdon stated he had a discussion with Ferman Yearby, a newly elected Rockport Council member and an instructor at the Learning Center, regarding the Community Corrections Board. He stated that Department of Corrections offenders are housed at a fee of \$35 per day, if the offenders are trained in employable skills. After expenses, the county could add approximately \$180,000 to the general fund. In addition, he stated it was Yearby's opinion that a three or four room building added on to the county jail may work for The Way and alleviate the fears of the residents. Logsdon stated he is not sure if this is a viable option but there are many options to consider. Conner stated that he is willing to work with anyone and he is already working with the people involved with the County Corrections Board. Conner discussed the 70% to 90% success rate of Teen Challenge.

Terry Davis, a resident of Rockport, stated he appreciates the fiscal restraint he has seen represented at the meeting. Davis stated that most residents would rather have emergency supplies located in their own community instead of a building in Chrisney. Gogel stated that EMA is equipping the nine local fire departments

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with emergency equipment in case of a disaster. Davis was concerned with spending money on a new building when there are other concerns in the county that are more pressing and when there is open office space in the county at the LEC. Martha Denning, current resident and employee of Association for a Better Rockport, stated that there are many unused buildings in Rockport, and there are many grants available for historic communities. Denning hopes to help develop the community into a place where the children raised here will stay here. She suggested giving tax breaks to businesses willing to locate on Main Street. Denning stated that the empty buildings in Rockport, which just need a face-lift, should be used before spending millions of dollars on a new building. Logsdon stated that some people think that the commissioners and councilmen are trying to move county government to the central part of the county, and that is not true. It has never been discussed.

Bunner and Winsett had to leave the meeting at 9:08 am.

Logsdon encouraged the city leaders, residents and The Way to get together and talk. Mayor Packer stated that the residents need more information. No petition has been filed with the Rockport Planning and Zoning Board. Conner stated that The Way has been waiting for the Community Corrections Board to get started in order to see how they can work together. Julie Payne, a newly elected Rockport city council member, stated that in her research she has found that if the ownership of the building was retained by the county, then the petition would need to be jointly filed by The Way and the county. She agrees that all of the parties need to get together and discuss all of the issues. Logsdon again challenged the groups to work together. Davis stated that he would hate to see county offices move out of Rockport and further depress the area. Packer stated that there is a Main Street Action Plan and if a courthouse annex was built it would fall right in line with the plan.

The council and commissioners take a break at 9:40 am.

The council and commissioners reconvene at 9:50 am.

EMA Director Perdue briefly described the actions taken last year to apply for the Homeland Security Grant for the Spencer County Public Safety Grant. He stated that the public safety building is important due to county offices paying rent, emergency offices needing to be in a hardened building to withstand tornados and earthquakes, and emergency services being centrally located. He further stated that the building will meet many needs for the county, such as meeting rooms, training rooms, shelter from a tornado, and extra office space. The courthouse and dispatch are both in locations which will most likely be destroyed in an earthquake. A central location is needed for leaders to meet after a disaster. Kroeger stated that questions have been raised about the Plan Commission and the Health Department leaving the courthouse. He further stated that he is against the having county offices that pay rent. Kroeger asked if it should be considered to build the operations center with no extra offices and build a cheaper building for office space. Logsdon discussed the office space requirements as listed from the prior survey and design.

Rininger stated that the point that needs to be addressed is whether or not the county reapplies for the grant. He stated it would be easier to apply for the whole amount and then cut back. The justification was there to apply last time. Kroeger disagreed. Rininger stated that if the extension office was moved out of the courthouse, the county would have room for the prosecutor to move into the courthouse and stop paying rent. He also stated that room will eventually be needed for an additional courtroom in the next few years. Wetherill stated that the Plan Commission office needs to be in the same building as the Surveyor, Recorder, Auditor, and Health Department. Kroeger asked Lisa Gehlhausen of Indiana 15 and Tom Schipp of Universal Design, about scaling back on the design. Gehlhausen stated the project is divided into eligible costs and ineligible costs. With the current estimates on the project the counties portion would be \$2,609,655 with stone paving and \$2,745,655 with asphalt paving, which includes 25% of the grant and all of the ineligible costs. Logsdon stated that the President announced that FEMA money will be cut back for areas where terrorists will never strike. He asked if that could affect this grant. Gehlhausen stated it is a competitive process and there is no way of knowing. Perdue stated that

if just the hardened area was built – only the eligible costs – it would cost the county only the 25% match, approximately \$800,000. Logsdon asked if all of the planned indoor parking is critical. If the vehicles are moved outside during training classes then the other training rooms could be used for something else or eliminated. Kroeger asked Schipp his opinion. Schipp stated that most of the bottom floor is eligible for the grant. Logsdon asked if the grant was submitted as is and was accepted, then the county decided on only a one floor structure, would the county have additional costs to re-work the roof structure needed. Schipp stated that the approved portion of the building has to be a concrete box. Ebert stated that he would like to keep the two story building and just eliminate some of the things inside; the Chrisney Community Center is in bad shape. Davis stated that the county might have a better chance of receiving the grant if it was scaled back.

Logsdon suggested a finance committee needs to be put together to study how the building would be financed. Kroeger stated that he felt the county should reapply because the ineligible costs can be cut back and in the long run it will be good for the county. Logsdon stated three people from the council and one from the commissioners should be appointed to a finance committee to study. The people he would like to see serve are Kroeger, Ebert, Spaetti, and Gogel. Kroeger stated he would like to include the engineer. Rininger stated he thinks the county should go forward with the grant request, then if the grant is made ineligible costs can be eliminated. Kress made a motion to appoint Kroeger, Ebert, and Spaetti to a finance committee. Cochenour seconded. All in favor, with Winsett and Bunner not present. Logsdon made a motion to appoint Gogel on the finance committee. Gogel seconded. All in favor.

Gogel made a motion to re-apply for the grant for the Spencer County Public Safety Building. Logsdon seconded. All in favor. Cochenour made a motion to re-apply for the grant for the Spencer County Public Safety Building. Ebert seconded. All in favor, with Winsett and Bunner not present. Gehlhausen stated that the grant will be awarded in late summer.

#### Replace Old EMT Building

Logsdon stated that this year the old EMT building was torn down. At that time it was determined that the Prosecutor, the EMT offices, and the Sheriff's department need approximately 3,000 square feet for storage/interview rooms. If the old jail is used by The Way, then maybe a pole barn building could be built on the empty lot next to the jail. Rininger stated that if the grant comes through then dispatch would be moved out, freeing up 340 square feet, which may work for an interview room. Discussion was had on evidence storage. Logsdon stated that the decision needs to be made if the county's need for storage is greater then the need for a re-entry program. Gogel stated he feels that the benefit to the county is much greater as something that will rehabilitate people than as storage. Discussion was had on if The Way and the Community Corrections Center can work together. Ebert stated that a study was done in the past on remodeling the old jail and it was not feasible. Discussion was had on space in the basement which is currently used by EMA and which would be available if the grant comes through.

Logsdon asked for a joint meeting between the next commissioners and council meetings on the 18<sup>th</sup> with Community Corrections to discuss their space needs.

#### Santa Claus Water

Spaetti stated that Cochenour, Kroeger, Winsett, and he went to the last Santa Claus Water meeting. Cochenour stated that the water board was asked about the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed and if a regional board was going to be established. The president of the board told them that it was not going to happen. Cochenour stated he feels that anytime the county is giving a project this kind of money there should be representation of the council on the board. Spaetti stated that since two councilmen are missing he would like to wait until the regular meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> to vote on releasing the money to Santa Claus Water. Kroeger stated that a regional board could not be formed right now because of the current bond agreement. He also stated that they are waiting on a rate study which will show what users will pay. Spaetti stated that if the money is withheld right now, then tax payer money will not be used for litigation. Wetherill also recommended waiting until the regular meeting for a vote.

Lisa Peters, representing Santa La Hill Water, stated the regional board which is being formed is only an advisory board, not a decision making board. Logsdon stated that was not the intent of the county. Gogel stated that it has to stay an advisory board only, until after the project is completed due to the grant. Cochenour stated that the president of the water board told them that if it was a regional board then two extra people would have to be hired and why should they pay for that. Peters stated that currently the plan is for Santa La Hill customers to pay more than the Santa Claus customers. Lueken stated that the requirement for the regional board was not in the original MOU but it is in the minutes. Kroeger stated that he would like to see the MOU signed between Santa Claus and Santa La Hill. Discussion was had on the assets of the two districts. Kroeger stated that the assets do not belong to the water districts but to the customers. Kroeger stated that it is customary for people farther away to pay a higher rate. Peters stated that most Santa La Hill customers are not farther away than Santa Claus customers.

Logsdon disclosed that the commissioners were asked for permission for Santa Claus Water to use the county right-of-way to run water lines down CR 800 E. The commissioners are requiring the road to be bonded. Logsdon stated that using county road rights-of-way will increase the cost of the project.

The commissioners left to continue the commissioners meeting in a separate room.

LTRSD

Charlie McMican, the council’s appointment to the LTRSD, came before the board and asked the board to accept his resignation, and appoint someone else to the LTRSD board. He stated that his being on the board will not help the project move forward; in addition he has family obligations he needs to attend to.

Bunner rejoined the meeting at 11:45 am.

McMican stated that the current project is good and will be a blessing. The tax base in Luce is dropping and the banks refuse to loan money for new construction. Several council members expressed appreciation for all that McMican has done in Luce Township. Spaetti asked if he thought there was any way for it to be worked out. McMican stated that it needs to be worked out.

Nathan Helms, a resident of Luce Township, stated that he disagrees with McMican. He thinks that the project is too large and too expensive. He also was upset that the sewer board is appointed instead of elected. Spaetti asked Helms what the council should do about the systems that have failed and cannot be fixed. Helms said he has not seen proof that any have failed. Dean Bolin stated that it is public record. Lueken explained how the sewer board members are appointed and by whom. Cochenour stated that a council member should be the person appointed to the sewer board to replace McMican. Helms stated that whoever is appointed it should be someone who is not completely for or completely against the project.

Kroeger asked if the council could request a sewer board member be removed. Wetherill stated it would have to be for cause, by the appointing body.

Further discussion was had on appointments, tap-on fees, funding, and the likelihood of the project being completed.

Spaetti thanked McMican for his service.

Kress made a motion to adjourn. Kroeger seconded. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 pm.

County Council,

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President	
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Attest:	
_____	_____
Cindy Shelton, Auditor	

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